

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 02708 280013Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----059165 280015Z /21

P 270008Z JUN 78
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2309
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 02708

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PROP, PDEV, WA, SF
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: REPORT OF CLANDESTINE UN FILM OPERATION

REF: STATE 161613

1. POLMIN AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNSELOR CALLED ON UN UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL AKATANI (OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION) JUNE 27 IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL. INITIAL CONTACT WITH POWELL BROUGHT THE SUGGESTION THAT WE DISCUSS THIS MATTER DIRECTLY WITH AKATANI, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY CONTROL OF ALL MEDIA OPERATIONS UNDERTAKEN BY AND FOR THE UN.

2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AS WE UNDERSTOOD IT AND THE VIEW OF THE US GOVERNMENT BASED ON AVAILABLE REPORTS, AKATANI EXPRESSED COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSITION WE SET FORTH. HE SAID HE IS CONSTANTLY AWARE OF THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES RELATED TO THE MANY DECISIONS HE MUST MAKE ON MEDIA AND OTHER PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES. THIS AWARENESS IS BASED NOT ONLY ON HIS OWN LONG PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AS A DIPLOMAT SPECIALIZING IN PUBLIC
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AFFAIRS, BUT IS ALSO REENFORCED BY THE MANY DELEGATIONS AND INTERESTS IN THE UN. HE RECOUNTED AT SOME LENGTH SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT QUESTIONS THAT HAVE RECENTLY ARISEN IN CONNECTION WITH A UN PROJECT TO FILM CONDITIONS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF A STRONGLY NEGATIVE RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM THE ISRAELI PERMREP, HE HAD CABLED INSTRUCTIONS TO

HIS FILM CREW PRESENTLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO AVOID ANY EFFORT TO UNDERTAKE FILMING ACTIVITIES ON ISRAELI SOIL. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE SECRETARIAT NEVER ORIGINATES SUCH FILM PROJECTS, BUT IS REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO THE REQUESTS FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES LEVIED ON THE SECRETARIAT BY BONA FIDE UN BODIES ACTING UNDER THE MANDATE OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS.

2. SPECIFICALLY WITH REGARD TO NAMIBIA, AKATANI SAID HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY LOOK INTO ACTIVITIES REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE UN. HE HAD A VAGUE RECOLLECTION OF AN INCIDENT INVOLVING A CAMERAMAN WHO WAS ARRESTED INSIDE NAMIBIA, BUT HE COULD NOT RECALL THE PRECISE TIME PERIOD OR OTHER DETAILS. HE SAID THE UN, IN ATTEMPTING TO FULFILL THE REQUESTS OF UN ORGANIZATIONS, OFTEN SOUGHT TO COMPOSE FILM PRESENTATIONS FROM FOOTAGE TAKEN BY NON-UN AGENCIES OR PERSONS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BUYING COMMERCIAL FOOTAGE OF RELEVANCE TO A CLOSED AREA LIKE NAMIBIA AND PAYING FOR THE CONTRACT OF A NON-UN PERSON TO ATTEMPT TO INFILTRATE THE AREA CLANDESTINELY.

3. WE EMPHASIZED THAT THE VIEW OF THE US GOVERNMENT, WERE OUR REPORTS TO BE PROVEN TRUE, IS BASED UPON CONCLUSIONS THAT SUCH ACTIONS GO WELL BEYOND THE MANDATE OF GA RESOLUTION 32/9/C, EXCEED THE BOUNDS OF PROPER UN BEHAVIOR
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AND INTRUDE INTO A HIGHLY SENSITIVE POLITICAL REALM VERY POSSIBLY AFFECTING DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE NAMIBIAN PROBLEM IN WHICH THE US GOVERNMENT HAS A SERIOUS INTEREST. AKATANI ACCEPTED THESE POINTS AND ASSURED US AGAIN THAT HE INTENDED TO LOOK FURTHER INTO THIS MATTER. LEONARD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, FILMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978USUNN02708
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780266-1000
Format: TEL
From: USUN NEW YORK
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780614/aaaaamav.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9f62e57e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 161613
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2186724
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NAMIBIA: REPORT OF CLANDESTINE UN FILM OPERATION
TAGS: PROP, PDEV, WA, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9f62e57e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014